SHORT COMMUNICATION

An onion aphid, *Neotoxoptera formosana* (Takahashi) (Hemiptera: Aphididae), new to Britain.—On 27.ix.99 I noticed that plants of Welsh onion, *Allium fistulosus*, growing in the Model Vegetable Garden at RHS Garden, Wisley, Surrey were heavily infested with a black aphid. As onions are not usually troubled by aphids samples were taken and using the key for aphids on chives/onions in Blackman & Eastop (1985), they were identified as *Neotoxoptera formosana* (Takahashi) (Hemiptera: Aphididae). This book gives its distribution as Japan, China, Taiwan, Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Hawaii and North America, where it attacks growing plants of Allium spp. and also attacks onion bulbs in store. Samples of the aphid were sent to the Invertebrate Identification Team at the Central Science Laboratory, Sand Hutton, York where the aphid's identity was confirmed by Roger Hammond. They were aware of only one previous European record when the aphid was found in 1994 on bulb onions imported into Finland from Holland. The Wisley record appears to be the first time N. formosana has been detected on growing plants in Europe.

The Welsh onions were being grown in a plastic tub 40 cm in diameter. A nearby similar tub containing garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*) was also infested to a lesser extent, as were leeks (*Allium porrum*) growing in the open soil. On the welsh onion and garlic chives the aphids were feeding on the foliage and flower heads. At the request of the Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate the Welsh onions were incinerated and the other host plants sprayed with insecticide to eradicate the aphid. Blackman & Eastop (1985) describe the apterous form of the aphid as 1.6–2.3 mm long, oval, shining magenta red to almost black. The antennae are black at the base and tip, the femora are black except at the bases, and the siphunculi are dark but paler than the body. The aphids seen at Wisley were black rather than magenta red. The winged forms are described as very dark red to black with the wing veins heavily black bordered. *N. formosana* is believed to be an anholocyclic species that lives on *Allium* species without migrating to an alternative type of host plant.

The origin of the Wisley infestation is unknown. The gardener responsible for the Model Vegetable Garden had noticed aphids on the Welsh onions earlier in the summer and had applied an insecticide without realising that this was something other than ordinary blackfly. The stock of Welsh onion had been supplied to Wisley in 1997 by a member of staff from his garden at Reading, Berks. He was not aware of any aphid problems on the plants at that time and none were noticed at Wisley during 1997–8. He has since moved house and so no longer has access to that garden. Wisley Garden grows a wide range of ornamental *Allium* species in addition to the vegetable types and there is the possibility that the aphid may have arrived on bulbs of these. During the 2000 growing season, ornamental and vegetable *Allium* species at Wisely will be examined to see if further infestations of the aphid can be found.

I am grateful to Roger Hammond for confirming the aphid's identity and to Beverly Barlett of PHSI who visited Wisley and gave advice on the aphid's eradication.—A. J. HALSTEAD, RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey GU23 6QB.

REFERENCE

Blackman, R. L. & Eastop, V. F. 1985. Aphids on the world's crops: an identification guide. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.